

Explanations & Humiliations by EvieSmallwood

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Summary:

The morning after doesn't go how Nancy expected it would at all.

Sequel of sorts to Our Party (but can be stand alone).

Explanations & Humiliations

Author's Note:

Hello, everyone! This work coordinates with another one of mine called Our Party, but it can be stand alone. Just a fun bit based off an idea I can't seem to get out of my head.

“What the hell is this?!”

Joyce Byers’ shrill voice sounds through the small home. Nancy sits up from where she’d been dozing off—in an old armchair by the window.

She catches Steve and Dustin exchanging furtive glances. Knowing it won’t be good, she rises from her chair hurriedly to see the issue.

Joyce is in the kitchen, leaning against the counter now and lighting a cigarette. The boys trail in after Nancy, looking sheepish. “What happened?!”

“See for yourself,” Joyce says, gesturing to the fridge.

Nancy frowns. She cracks the door open and gasps. Jesus fucking Christ—

“Why is that in there?!”

Dustin swallows. “Before you say anything, know that all I wanted was to contribute to the realm of science—”

“You...” Nancy is momentarily unable to articulate, she can’t believe her brother’s friends can be so *stupid* sometimes. “You need to get rid of that.”

“But it’s a scientific discovery!”

“I don’t give a shit! It’s evil and it’s dead and you need to burn it!”

Steve folds his arms over his chest. “That’s what I said.”

Nancy rolls her eyes. “But you put it in there anyway?”

He sputters something about bribing and puppy dog eyes and common sense, but Joyce speaks over him. “Listen—I don’t care, I’m not mad, I just want it gone. Burn it in the backyard or something.”

With that she slips out, headed down the hall to Will’s room. Nancy had last checked on him about half an hour ago. He’d looked far less feverish, just verging on slightly clammy.

She wants to follow, but she isn’t sure if she’s quite ready to face an awake Will. Not after last night. Instead, she walks past her ex boyfriend, who’s too busy bickering with Dustin to notice, and settles on the couch.

The living room is occupied almost solely by the kids, given that Jonathan is napping, and the Chief is in the shower. This whole situation is so surreal to Nancy. She never thought she’d partake in a slumber party with *Jim Hopper*.

But she had; it had been a jumbled, sprawled out mess with too much snoring and plenty of quiet nightmares.

Nancy leans her head against the couch cushions. She almost dozes off when someone starts pounding on the door.

They all jerk to attention and then freeze.

“Billy,” breathes Max—who’s new and unfamiliar but definitely belongs in some weird way.

Nancy reaches for the nearby rifle, creeping slowly toward the door. Mike is just behind her, holding her jacket sleeve with wide eyes, and Steve is flanking her right side.

“*Michael Theodore Wheeler!*”

“Oh, Jesus.”

They all deflate as one, sagging against one another or the furniture —whatever will hold their weight. Nancy glares at the door. Her mother knocks again. “Joyce! Hello?”

She sets the gun in the corner alcove behind the door and opens it, too relieved it's not another monster to really think straight.

Her mom—who looks like the epitome of an upper-middle-class wife today, with her newly done hair and plaid coat—cocks her head in confusion. “Nancy?”

It's then that Nancy remembers she'd told her mother she was sleeping at some friend's house—Ally or Trish or whoever—and she swallows nervously. “Mom.”

“What—what are you doing here? What's going on?”

“I came to pick up Mike,” Nancy lies. “Figured you would wanna make that PTA meeting—”

“What the hell is on the walls?!?”

Nancy tries to step in front of her mother, to obstruct her view. “Nothing!”

Her mom pushes past, a rush of Chanel No. 5 and exasperation. She takes in the scene with wide eyes and an open mouth; Mike, with his friends, with Eleven hanging off his arm in hand-me-down's of Will's and Joyce's. The drawn vines on the walls, most of which have been removed, but some of which—the ones on the ceiling, and the back wall—remain. And Steve, of course, with his bruises and bat.

“What on earth are you all doing?! Where is Joyce?”

“Mom—”

She and Mike are both stepping forward, speaking, throwing out hasty lies that don't match. Their mother shakes them off. She looks more angry than she has in a while.

Joyce emerges from the hallway. “What's all the—?” She sees their mom and stops dead. “Karen! Hi!”

““Hi”?! Joyce! What the hell is all of this?!”

“Well, you know, boys. They got carried away drawing and—”

“And bled all over the living room?” Nancy’s mom gestures to a darkened spot on the floor where the demodog had died, and another spray of blood from Steve and Billy’s fight on the wall. “Joyce, there are—there are *weapons* everywhere. What are you doing with *guns*?!?”

“Mom,” Mike steps forward and grabs her hands. “We’re fine, okay? You don’t need to worry—”

“Don’t tell me what I need to worry about, young man!” She jerks away, and then softens just slightly. “You’ve been lying to me,” she says. “Both of you.”

It’s not an accusation so much as a statement. She sounds almost heartbroken, and for a minute Nancy feels sorry until she remembers everything about last night. “This isn’t about you,” she finds herself saying. “Just go home, okay?”

“Are you *crazy*?! You think I’m gonna leave you here with *her*?!?”

She gestures to Joyce, who purses her lips. “Hey!” Steve defends.

“What?! You can’t possibly think she’s a responsible parent!”

“What’s all this fuss?”

Hopper steps into view, hair still wet from his shower. He takes one look at Karen and groans. “Great. This is just what we need.”

“Excuse me?!”

Hopper doesn’t acknowledge their mother. He glares at Mike, and then Nancy. “You said you took care of this.”

Nancy scowls. “I thought I had. I didn’t expect her to come out here, I didn’t think she—” Nancy stops herself, though it’s obvious to everyone what she’d been about to say. Her cheeks heat up. “Jesus.”

Hopper steps forward. “Listen, whatever you think happened here, you’re wrong, okay? These kids are perfectly fine, they were never in danger—”

“There’s blood—”

"It's fake blood," Mike blurts. His eyes are alight with that look; the Wheeler Idea Look. "Nancy did tell you Will and I were making a movie, right? We just spilled some on accident."

Their mom starts to relax, tension bleeding from her shoulders. "And the guns, Michael?"

"Those are mine," Hopper says gruffly. "Brought 'em here to clean 'em."

Karen frowns. "But what *are* you doing here?"

There's a small, pathetic silence. "They're dating!" Nancy says, turning to her mother and putting on her most sincere face. "It's only been like two months, it's super new, they didn't want anyone knowing."

Her mom's eyes widen. "Oh."

"Yeah," Joyce scowls. "Oh."

"I'm sorry, Joyce, it's just... with everything that happened last year, I—"

"No, I get it," Joyce smiles, and it seems real enough. *She really does get it.* "It's okay, Karen."

Her mom nods. She worries her hands together. "So... are you two ready to go?"

They exchange brief glances, before Mike's gaze drifts to El. Nancy watches a thousand emotions play on her brother's face. He squeezes El's hand, and presses the smallest, briefest kiss to her cheek, before grabbing his backpack. "Yeah."

Their mom seems a little dazed. She studies El with a new intensity, cheeks pink.

Nancy glances at Joyce, who nods, giving her a far more sincere smile. The last thing she wants to do is leave without saying goodbye to Jonathan, but then her mother would ask questions about *that*, too.

Instead, she turns away.

“Mom,” Nancy opens the door. Her mom jumps. “C’mon.”

They shuffle outside, calling apologies and goodbyes over their shoulders. Once the door is closed behind them, Nancy feels all of her adrenaline, and all of that comfort drain away. The cold November air is like a slap in the face.

Mike nudges her shoulder with his own as they walk back to the station wagon. “It’ll be okay.”

“Yeah,” she nods. “I hope so.”

Author's Note:

We like Karen. We do not like Ted.